

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 061104Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1211
USINT BAGHDAD
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ECON, ETRD, SY, IZ
SUBJECT: IRAQI COMMERCIAL ATTACHE DESCRIBES COOLING OF IRAQI-SYRIAN
ECONOMIC TIES

SUMMARY: IRAQI COMMERCIAL ATTACHE REVIEWED IRAQI-SYRIAN
ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. SYRIANS TO BLAME FOR VIOLATING
EUPHRATES WATER AGREEMENTS AND CUTTING IRAQI TRANSIT TRADE
ACROSS SYRIA. ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS MADE WITH TURKEY
AND JORDAN BUT THESE ARE NOT SATISFACTORY SUBSTITUTES.
FUTURE BRIGHT, HOWEVER, AS EXPANSION OF BOSRA PORT HAS
ELIMINATED CONGESTION.

1. IRAQI COMMERCIAL ATTACHE, USUF HASAN IZZAWI, BRIEFED
EMBASSY ECONOFF ON CURRENT PARLOUS STATE IRAQI-SYRIAN
ECONOMIC TIES DURING LATTER'S INTRODUCTORY VISIT. IZZAWI
BELIEVES BAGHDAD'S RELATIONS WITH DAMASCUS ESSENTIALLY
POISONED BY SYRIAN VIOLATION OF EXISITNG AGREEMENTS BETWEEN
SYRIA, IRAQ, ANDTURKEY ON DISTRIBUTIONOF EUPHRATES
WATER. TURKEY, IN IRAQI VIEW, HAS ONLY RETAINED
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QUANTITIES OF WATER ALLOWED IT UNDER AGREEMENTS; SYRIA
RETAINED FAR MORE IN FORMING LAKE ASSAD. SYRIAN ACTION
CAUGHT IRAQ AT BAD MOMENT; SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND
FARMERS WHO HAD HAD THEIR LANDS EFFECTIVELY DESTROYED
BY FLOODS ALONG THE DIJLA (TIGRIS) RIVER HAD BEEN COMPENSATED
WITH LANDS IRRIGATED BY THE EUPHRATES JUST BEFORE THE
SYRIAN ACTION. FURTHERMORE, CONTINUED WITHHOLDING

OF EUPHRATES WARER IS LEADING TO SERIOUS PROBLEMS
OF SALINITY BUILDUP AFFECTING AGRICULTURAL AREA INHABITED
BY THREE MILLION PEOPLE.

2. SYRIA HAS CONTINUED TO MAKE PROBLEMS FOR IRAQ. IN
NOVEMBER 1975 SYRIA BANNED ALL TRANSIT TRAFFIC IN IRAQI
GOODS. ORDER DID NOT APPLY TO GOODS SHIPPED PRIOR TO
DECREE BUT "MALICIOUSLY IMPOSED" PAPER WORK TO CLEAR
HALF-MISSION TONS OF IRAQI GOODS THAT CONTINUED TO UNLOAD
AT LATTAKIA AND TARTOUS UNTIL THIS FALL OCCUPIED FULL-TIME
ATTENTION OF IZZAWI. (IRAQIS MAINTAIN COMMERCIAL OFFICE
IN LATTAKIA, AND IZZAWI SPENT SIX MONTHS THERE.)

3. IRAQ HAS ATTEMPTED TO BYPASS SYRIA BY CONCLUDING
TRANSIT AGREEMENTS WITH TURKEY AND JORDAN. IN TURKEY,
IRAQ HAS AGREED TO ASSIST IN EXPANSION OF ISKENDERUN
HARBOR THROUGHPUTCAPACITY. TURKEY, HOWEVER, RESTRICTS
MOST OF TRANSIT CARGOES TO TURKISH TRUCKS WHICH ARE
GENERALLY TOO SMALL TO SHIP ECONOMICALLY. ONLY SMALL
QUANTITY GOODS COME THIS WAY. JORDAN WAS GRANTED \$34
MILLION TO EXPAND AQABA PORT CAPACITY AND AQABA-AMMAN-
BAGHDAD ROAD. UNFORTUNATELY, CONGESTION AT AQABA PORT
SO SERIOUS (40-70 DAYS) THAT SHIPPERS DISCOURAGED.
IZZAWI STATES THAT SOON ALMOST ALL IRAQI SEABORNE TRADE
WILL SHIFT TO BOSRA WHICH, WITHRECENT EXPANSION, IS
NOW FUNCTIONING WITH NO DELAYS; SHIPS ARE UNLOADING
THE DAY THEY ARRIVE.

5. BIOGRAPHIC NOTE ON IZZAWI: YUSUF HASAN IZZAWI APPEARS
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TO BE ABOUT 40 YEARS OLD. HE IS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN COMMERCE AND HAS SERVED IN DAMASCUS
SINCE FEBRUARY 1975. HE EXPECTS TO RETURN TO BAGHDAD IN
ABOUT A YEAR AND HAS NO DESIRE FOR FURTHER OVERSEAS
ASSIGNMENTS. IZZAWI IS MARRIED BUT HIS FAMILY SPENDS
MOST OF ITS TIME IN BAGHDAD.

6. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF ALL ITS PROBLEMS WITH SYRIA,
IRAQ CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN CORRECT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
WITH DAMASCUS. THE IRAQI EMBASSY IS TIGHTLY SHUTTERED,
WINDOWS ARE NEVER OPENED SO FAR AS WE CAN SEE AND IT HAS
MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF POLICE PRESENCE. ON THE
OTHER HAND, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SERIOUS DEMONSTRATIONS
IN FRONT OF THE IRAQI EMBASSY -- UNLIKE THE EGYPTIAN
EMBASSY JUST DOWN THE STREET WHICH WAS SACKED FOR FAR
LESS PROVOCATION THAN THE RECENT SERIES OF IRAQI-
INSPIRED TERRORIST ACTS IN SYRIA -- AND IRAQ
CONTINUES TO RUN ONE OF THE LARGER PAVILIONS IN THE
DAMASCUS TRADE FAIR. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT IRAQ

GETS ITS EXHIBITION SPACE AT THE FAIR FOR FREE IN
RECIPROCITY FOR FREE SPACE AWARDED SYRIA AT THE
BAGHDAD FAIR.
MURPHY

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